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A Sample Distribution of North Vietnamese
Civilian Casualties 1965-66

30 January 1967

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1. Summary

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The analysis [redacted] covering 1965-66

indicates that 1,820 civilian casualties had been inflicted during the two year period. This coverage while sketchy, and by no means representing aggregate North Vietnamese casualties, does however, provide some worthwhile information on the distribution of casualties. It was observed that from 38-70 percent of sample casualties were probably innocent civilians,* and that the remainder were unknown and quasi military/logistics types. These percentages, when applied to the aggregate casualty estimate, indicate that some 10,900 to 17,600 casualties out of the total 35,700 casualties were probably inflicted on the North Vietnamese civilian population. Attacks on houses and small villages apparently accounted for most of the casualties.

2. Sources

The availability of credible casualty data pertaining to the bombing of North Vietnam is extremely limited and presents a distinct limitation on the reliability of aggregate estimated of casualties. Generally, official Hanoi statements on casualties (protests to the ICC, newspaper articles, and radio broadcasts) are generated for propaganda purposes and have proved to be of little value in trying to deduce the total number of civilian casualties

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inflicted on North Vietnam by the Rolling Thunder program. [redacted]

[redacted]

*Defined in this paper to exclude civilians engaged in anti-aircraft duties and those supporting the logistics effort.

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POW interrogation reports have proved to be a [redacted] less

credible source of information. Seventeen worthwhile references to casualties in North Vietnam were observed in the interrogation reports. Unfortunately, in most interrogation reports, the source of information is often vague. It is not known whether the prisoner actually observed the attack, read about it in the newspapers or heard about it through conversation or over the radio.

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3. Definitions

For purposes of analysis, casualties [redacted]

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[redacted] were classified into three categories. (1) Civilians: those casualties

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identified as such [redacted] or being associated with facilities of a civilian related nature i.e. house, hospital, school that were struck. (2) Quasi-military/logistics: those casualties identified as such, or being associated with anti-aircraft facilities, roads, bridges, trucks that were attacked.

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(3) Unknown [redacted]

4. Distribution of Sample Data

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The summary [redacted] for the 1965-66 period is

presented in table 1 below. Approximately 70 percent of the observed casualties

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were defined as probable civilians, with the Quasi-military/logistics types

and the unknowns accounting for the remainder. [redacted]

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Table 1
Summary (1965-66) [redacted]

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	<u>Observations</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Casualties</u>
Prob. Civilians	68	855	429	1,284
Quasi Military/Logistics	64	100	228	328
Unknown	118	112	96	208
Total	<u>250</u>	<u>1,067</u>	<u>753</u>	<u>1,820</u>

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Generally, civilian casualties were inflicted by strikes against houses-

villages, although schools and hospitals were occasionally mentioned. Quasi

military/logistics casualties were normally inflicted by strikes against roads,

bridges, and work camps.

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5. Application of the Sample Distribution to the Aggregate Estimate*

It is estimated that about 36,000 casualties (military and civilian) have been inflicted on North Vietnam since the beginning of the Rolling Thunder Program. Approximately 60 percent of the casualties appear to be fatalities, the remainder wounded. By applying the relative casualty distribution range to casualty estimates below (see table 2) it is possible to speculate on the number of civilian casualties inflicted on North Vietnam.

The number of civilian casualties (armed reconnaissance figures adjusted to reflect the sample distribution) for the 1965-66 period is estimated to range from 10,900 to 17,600.

Table 2

Estimated Casualties from Rolling Thunder 1965-66

Civilians

Fixed Targets	2,900
Armed Reconnaissance	21,000
	<u>23,900</u>

Military

Fixed Targets	4,700
Armed Reconnaissance	7,100
	<u>11,800</u>
Grand Total	35,700

*See McNamara IV, section 4 for a detailed description of the methodology used in deriving a total casualty estimate.